

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

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DIA WASHDC

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LIMA

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR OVIP EC

SUBJECT: CONTINUED UNREST AND INSTABILITY WITHIN GOE

REF: A) QUITO 6807 B) QUITO 7221 C) QUITO 7469 D) QUITO 7488

1. SUMMARY: SPECULATION ABOUT THE POLITICAL LONGEVITY OF PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ CONTINUES. THE CIVILIAN OPPOSITION HAS NOT LET UP IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE INVESTIGATIONS AND TRIAL OF THOSE ACCUSED BY THE GOE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT TO CRITICIZE AND ATTACK THE MILITARY REGIME. THERE HAS BEEN A SPATE OF RUMORS THAT SOMETHING DRAMATIC WILL OCCUR OF POLITICAL IMPORTANCE DURING FESTIVITIES RELATED TO GUAYAQUIL DAY, OCTOBER 9-14, AND THERE ARE PERSISTENT REPORTS OF DISSATISFACTION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS THAT A DISILLUSIONED RODRIGUEZ MIGHT RENOUNCE, WHICH HE BELIES BY APPARENTLY PERSEVERING IN HIS EFFORTS TO HOLD POPULAR SUPPORT AND TO RESTORE HIS POWER BASE WITHIN THE MILITARY. THE PRINCIPAL MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE PUBLICLY DECLARED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE RODRIGUEZ GOVERNMENT, BUT THE

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DIFFICULTIES THE ARMED FORCES ARE ENCOUNTERING IN TRYING

THOSE ACCUSED IN THE COUP ATTEMPT PROBABLY REFLECTS CONTINUED DIVISION WITHIN RODRIGUEZ PRINCIPAL POWER BASE. RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL OBSERVERS AND THE MISSION STILL SEE NO PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TO RODRIGUEZ, BUT DO NOT AS YET ENTIRELY RULE OUT A COUP ATTEMPT, OR EVEN HIS THROWING IN THE TOWEL. END SUMMARY.

2. CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ECUADOREAN AIR FORCE VILLAGOMEZ INFORMED AN OFFICER OF MILITARY LIAISON OFFICE ON OCT 3 THAT THE GOE WAS POSTPONING VISIT OF USAFSO BREEDLOVE "BECAUSE THE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE (ECUADOR) IS STILL QUITE UNSTABLE AND A VISIT IN THE LATE OCTOBER TIME-FRAME WOULD BE INCONVENIENT." VILLAGOMEZ' STATEMENT ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION WAS SUPPOSEDLY MADE WITH FORETHOUGHT. THIS CONCERN, STATED BY A SENIOR ECUADOREAN AIR FORCE OFFICER, REINFORCES OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF UNREST AND DISSATISFACTION MISSION OFFICERS HAVE PICKED UP PRIVATELY FROM ECUADOREAN MILITARY OFFICERS SINCE THE SEPT 1 COUP ATTEMPT. ADDED TO THE CONTINUING SPECULATION THAT PERSISTS AMONG MANY CIVILIANS, THE WIDESPREAD PREOCCUPATION OF SO MANY ECUADOREANS ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND LONGEVITY OF THE RODRIGUEZ GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT SOMETHING OF NOTE TO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM WILL OCCUR IN CONJUNCTION WITH FESTIVITIES SURROUNDING GUAYAQUIL DAY OCTOBER 9 TO OCTOBER 14. (ONE OF THE LATEST RUMORS, HOWEVER, IS THAT BECAUSE FURTHER PREPARATION IS NEEDED THAT ACTION AGAINST RODRIGUEZ MIGHT NOT OCCUR IN CONNECTION WITH THE HOLIDAYS, BUT WILL HAPPEN BEFORE NOVEMBER 1.) THE PRESIDENT IS VISITING GUAYAQUIL FOR THE CELEBRATIONS. PREDICTIONS VARY FROM THERE BEING A COUP, TO FORMER PRESIDENT VELASCO IBARRA'S RETURN, TO DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT ABOUT A PLAN FOR "INSTITUTIONALIZING THE REVOLUTION" FOR A TRANSITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, TO HIS RENUNCIATION AND NAMING ANOTHER MILITARY OFFICER AS PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT.

4. A GOOD DEAL OF THE NEWSPAPER CRITICISM AND POLITICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS OF CIVILIAN "OPPOSITION" LEADERS CONTINUE
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TO FOCUS ON THE DETAINED COUP PLOTTERS. ON OCTOBER 4 THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL OF WAR COMMENCED THE SECOND PHASE OF THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE ACCUSED AND JUDGMENT WAS EXPECTED TO BE MADE RAPIDLY. THE PROCEEDING HAS FLOUNDERED, HOWEVER, AND MOST INTERPRET THIS AS A SETBACK FOR RODRIGUEZ AND AS A DIVISIVE POINT OF CONTENTION FOR VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

5. PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ CONTINUES HIS INTENSIVE SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES, SPEECHES, INAUGURATIONS, AND HIS VISITS TO MILITARY UNITS. ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, HE MET IN CLOSED SESSIONS WITH OFFICERS OF THE NAVY AND AIR FORCE. WE HAVE PRIVATE REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT RODRIGUEZ HAS MADE LITTLE PROGRESS IN CONSOLIDATING HIS SUPPORT WITHIN THE NAVY, AND WE ARE UNCERTAIN OF HIS STANDING WITH THE AIR FORCE AND THE ARMY.

5. PAPERS OF OCTOBER 4 REPORTED THAT MILITARY UNITS OF QUITO FULLY SUPPORT THE RODRIGUEZ GOVERNMENT. AND, ON OCTOBER 5 AND 6 NEWSPAPERS CARRIED STORIES AND/OR LARGE ADS STATING THAT BECAUSE OF THE MANY ABSURD AND FALSE RUMORS CIRCULATING ABOUT THE ARMED FORCES, THE ARMED FORCES WERE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCING THEIR COMPLETE SUPPORT FOR THE "GOVERNMENT PRESIDED OVER BY GENERAL RODRIGUEZ LARA, WHICH REMAINS LOYAL TO THE BASIC IDEALS OF THE MOVEMENT WHICH BROUGHT US TO POWER," AND WENT ON TO STATE THAT "NO CHAOTIC EFFORT NOR REGRESSIVE ATTEMPT WILL BE CAPABLE OF DAMAGING OUR UNITY AND DIVERTING US FROM OUR OBJECTIVES WHICH ARE THOSE OF THE ECUADOREAN PEOPLE." THE AD, ADDRESSED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC, WAS SIGNED BY ADMIRAL POVEDA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES AND GENERAL COMMANDER OF THE NAVY; GENERAL DURAN, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY; COL. LEORO, COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE; AND GENERAL VEGA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY.

6. ON OCTOBER 3, THE DCM AND CONSUL GENERAL IN GUAYAQUIL MET WITH FRANCISCO HUERTA MONTALVO, THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE RADICAL LIBERAL PARTY. HUERTA TOLD THEM THAT DESPITE ALL THE DISCONTENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, THERE ARE NO CIVILIAN LEADERS IN SIGHT WHO COULD PUT TOGETHER AN ACCEPTABLE GROUP OF CIVILIANS CAPABLE OF RUNNING THE

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COUNTRY SATISFACTORILY. HE INDICATED THAT HE SAW NO FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUED MILITARY RULE AT THIS MOMENT.

7. COMMENT: MISSION OFFICERS ARE KEEPING EARS AND EYES OPEN, WHILE TAKING CARE NOT TO GIVE ANY FALSE APPEARANCES OF USG INTERVENTION IN ECUADOREAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. MISSION STILL SEES NO PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE TO RODRIGUEZ AT THIS TIME, AND BELIEVES THAT IF HE MAINTAINS HIS POLITICAL WILL THAT HE CAN SURVIVE. HOWEVER, WE STILL CANNOT ENTIRELY RULE OUT A COUP ATTEMPT, OR EVEN HIS THROWING IN THE TOWEL. WE REALIZE THIS MESSAGE IS SIMILAR IN CONTENT TO REFS A AND B, BUT BELIEVE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE INSTABILITY PERSISTING IN ECUADOREAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS.

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